

# Sandwell Community Caring Trust

Monitoring visit report

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# Monitoring visit: main findings

## Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by ESFA and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the *Further education and skills inspection handbook*, especially the sections entitled 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

Sandwell Community Caring Trust (SCCT) employs around 600 staff, who provide care services to the elderly and those with learning and physical disabilities in Sandwell and the surrounding area. SCCT is a social enterprise and a registered charity. SCCT Training is a division of the trust that provides training and development for staff, both existing and new, in the health and social care field. After gaining approval from ESFA to run apprenticeships in July 2017, SCCT Training has been providing learning to apprentices at levels 2 and 3. Of the 16 apprentices in learning, nine are on frameworks, and the rest are on standards-based apprenticeships. Eight apprentices are on level 3 programmes, and the others are on level 2 apprenticeships, including one apprentice in business administration. From its head office, managers provide off-the-job training through a number of self-employed trainers. The apprenticeship team is based at the Sandwell Valley School. This is an independent school for hard-to-reach young people, those excluded or at risk of exclusion, and new arrivals to the country. The principal of the school is responsible for the delivery of apprenticeships supported by an apprenticeship manager, a part-time assessor, and several staff from the school.

## Themes

### How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

### Insufficient progress

Leaders and managers did not fully appreciate the challenges of setting up as a new training provider. The trust had useful experience of working as a subcontractor for five years with a Midlands-based consortium of training providers. Senior leaders of the trust and the principal did not fully evaluate the skills and capacity of their staff to enable SCCT Training to establish itself as a successful provider of high-quality learning. Staff replicated most of the training processes relevant to their former status as a subcontractor, without having a due regard to their new responsibilities as a prime contract holder. Senior leaders put too much faith in the ability of their staff to adapt to the new responsibilities and did not check the quality of training delivery.

Performance management is weak. Senior leaders do not hold staff to account and do not check the quality of their work with apprentices. The staff job descriptions are vague and do not reflect their changed job roles and responsibilities. Managers do not have a clear and accurate overview of the progress of their apprentices. Apprentices make slow progress. Managers' claim that more than 80% of their apprentices would complete their framework/standards within planned timescales is not based on reliable evidence.

Governance is weak. Senior leaders use an informal approach to check the delivery of the apprenticeship provision. Senior leaders of the trust do not seek written reports on the performance of the apprenticeship provision, including any issues such as staffing or quality assurance. They were not fully aware of the scale of the poor practice.

SCCT do not have a sufficient number of experienced and well-qualified staff to ensure that they provide high-quality training to apprentices. For example, the team has lost two members of staff in the last six months, including the quality coordinator. No one has checked the quality of progress reviews and the progress of apprentices. Senior leaders have not filled these vacancies, although in recent weeks a new team member with substantial experience and skills has joined the workforce.

Senior leaders and managers do not routinely promote the requirement to provide the full off-the-job training to apprentices and their employers. A few employers are not aware whether their apprentices are undertaking an apprenticeship programme. Senior leaders have not provided clear guidance about what constitutes off-the-job training. As a result, managers do not monitor apprentices' off-the-job training, and apprentices are not aware of their right to paid study time for training. A few apprentices complete their studies in their own time. However, all apprentices attend frequently well-planned workshop sessions for English and mathematics in Sandwell Valley School as well as all mandatory training at the trust's offices.

The arrangements for quality assurance are weak. Observers undertake frequent observations of staff interactions with apprentices at various stages such as induction, teaching, progress and exit reviews. The observers use a tick-box approach to check whether staff have completed certain activities. The purpose of these observations is unclear, since managers do not identify any improvements that staff should make that will benefit their apprentices. The evidence of the ongoing professional development of staff in coaching and teaching skills is slight.

Internal quality assurance is ineffective. For example, internal verifiers do not identify assessors' poor practice. Managers did not provide any evidence of external verifier reports. The standard of apprentices' written work is poor and limits their ability to carry out their job roles to the highest levels. However, senior leaders observe the quality of external training and respond effectively to weaknesses that employers or apprentices identify.

In recent weeks, managers have finalised the arrangements for the end-point assessment of standards-based apprentices. Managers have gone beyond their own deadline to establish this arrangement. Consequently, they have not made apprentices and their employers aware of the impending assessment arrangements. Apprentices who are to take their assessment soon have not had adequate time to prepare for it.

Senior leaders have ensured that school staff provide effective tuition and support in English and mathematics. As a result, apprentices who need qualifications in these subjects, to complete their apprenticeship programme, achieve them. Many apprentices use helpful online learning resources in English and mathematics and other mandatory training to enhance their knowledge. Apprentices use a valuable care diploma booklet that contains essential knowledge for care workers.

Senior leaders ensure that they employ only apprentices who are fully committed to care work. For example, before apprentices start work, leaders require them to undertake 30 hours of voluntary work to demonstrate their interest and commitment. Staff recruit apprentices in consultation with employers. Apprentices are aware of their next steps in learning or in their careers.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?      Insufficient progress**

Staff do not conduct a thorough initial assessment to identify apprentices' existing knowledge, skills and behaviours, since many of them have been working in care for a long time. For example, over half of the apprentices have worked in the care sector for three years or more. Apprentices and staff are unable to quantify what new knowledge, skills and behaviours apprentices have developed and what value the apprenticeship programme adds to apprentices' careers.

The standard of apprentices' written work is low for the level of study, both at levels 2 and 3. Staff do not set clear expectations for apprentices' assignments. For example, in an assignment on communication, a level 3 apprentice did not mention written communication.

Staff do not provide effective feedback to apprentices on their written work. Their marking is often just a tick. Staff do not comment on the quality of the work that apprentices produce and often accept a poor standard of work. As a result, apprentices are unclear about the quality and standards of their work.

The quality of progress reviews and subsequent target-setting is weak. Staff conduct progress reviews frequently with apprentices and, in a few cases, with employers, to assess apprentices' overall progress. However, they do not set precise and measurable objectives for apprentices. All objectives are very general and too imprecise to enable staff to establish apprentices' progress. For example, many

progress reviews have identical comments for different apprentices, such as 'continue to improve letter writing and fractions'. These comments recur over several months.

Apprentices use their English and mathematical skills well in the workplace to carry out their duties. For example, they record their residents' daily logs accurately, including fluid intake and medicine administration records. Apprentices do not develop their digital skills to an appropriate level. Several of the apprentices, particularly mature apprentices, are not confident in using information technology.

Apprentices enjoy their programmes of study and work alongside experienced colleagues. Employers support apprentices well through mentoring and pairing them with more experienced workers. This helps apprentices to enhance their skills, confidence and communication skills.

A few of the apprentices develop new knowledge and skills or refresh their knowledge. For example, apprentices improve their care practice by making better use of care plans and understanding the implications of relevant legislation, infection control, and administering medication.

Apprentices provide a good standard of care to residents and clients using good levels of empathy and sensitivity. They display professional standards of practical care, including appropriate attitudes and behaviours. For example, a young apprentice, while working in a care home for the elderly who have dementia, took great care to know the background of her residents. She used quizzes to stimulate their memories.

Apprentices develop a sound understanding of the principles of equality and diversity. They provide effective person-centred care, bearing in mind the diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints. Apprentices respect residents' views and learn how to improve their personal skills, based on their experiences.

### **How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress**

Safeguarding is very high on the agenda of the SCCT, school and governors. The culture of safeguarding permeates through the school and the employers' workforce. Leaders reflect safeguarding well in the trust's values.

Senior leaders conduct thorough background checks on staff, their identity and their right to work, to ensure that only suitable staff work with apprentices.

The school principal and her deputy take responsibility for safeguarding. The designated safeguarding officer and her deputy have sound knowledge that they frequently update. They have highly effective links with all the relevant agencies.

Managers conduct thorough investigations of incidents and take appropriate steps to ensure that apprentices learn in a safe environment.

Staff attend relevant training to stay abreast of the developing and expanding field of safeguarding. For example, staff have an up-to-date understanding of topics including the 'Prevent' duty, extremism, radicalisation, gangs, knife crime, drugs, female genital mutilation, grooming, cyber bullying, and harassment.

Apprentices develop their knowledge of the above topics through induction training and by completing a useful online programme. Apprentices use their knowledge to protect themselves. They use safe working practices, such as using hoists to lift the residents, and know how to look after them if they have a fall.

Apprentices feel safe and work in safe environment. Lone workers know how to keep themselves safe and take appropriate precautions.

Apprentices recognise that deprivation of personal liberty of the residents is a safeguarding matter. They use this knowledge to put health and safety, including residents' physical and mental well-being, at the heart of all the care they provide.

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